

# **Commissioner J David Donahue Welcomes Miss America 2000 to Indiana Women's Prison To Highlight Veteran's Support Initiatives**

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Heather French Henry, Miss America 2000 and  
Commissioner J David Donahue

Indianapolis, Ind. (December 14, 2005) – Commissioner J. David Donahue welcomed Miss America 2000: Heather French Henry at the Indiana Women’s Prison to showcase three major facility initiatives dedicated to supporting veterans and their children.

Ms. French thanked staff and offenders at the Department and Commissioner Donahue for their innovative solutions in touching lives of veterans.

“You don’t have to be Miss America to make a difference,” added French. “Veterans are the greatest love story there is; these people have made sacrifices without ever having met you. I hope that you can try to give back to them.”

“We are excited and honored to welcome Ms. French Henry to the Indiana Women’s Prison, said Commissioner J. David Donahue. “Her enthusiasm and dedication motivated all of us.”

A small, but impressive choir from School 14, a local neighborhood school, which has the largest percentage of children of homeless veterans, performed a Christmas program for Miss America, Commissioner Donahue and staff.

Director of the Community Outreach Program, Tammy Atwood, presented projects dedicated to benefiting the Homeless Veterans, Soldiers and Sailors Home and Veteran's Hospital.

"The largest and most challenging project is making quilts, pillows and bags for the annual Thanksgiving donation to homeless veterans. The project began in 2001, and has grown steadily. The Women's Prison is currently making 150 sleeping bags annually which are donated to the American Legion," said Atwood.

"We have a great partnership with the American Legion who sponsors this project. They give a cash donation used for the batting and stuffing to complete the projects. All other supplies and material are donated by volunteers and friends of the prison," added Atwood.

Over 100 sleeping bags and pillows are made and distributed to homeless veterans annually.

The second annual project sponsored by the Women's Prison is the Soldiers and Sailors Home in Knightstown, Indiana. The organization is dedicated to the care for the children of veterans. Offenders at the Indiana Women's Prison sew large Christmas stockings for approximately 160 children and through generous donations from community groups, the stockings are filled with candy, toys and hygiene items. Each stocking is then topped with and topped with a hand-made doll or bear.

This year, offenders at the Women's Prison distributed 143 Love Bears, sleeping bags, Christmas stockings and Easter baskets to children of veterans.

Hundreds of Care Bears made at the Indiana Women's Prison were distributed on Veteran's Day to the patients at the Veterans Hospital. Wheelchair and walker covers, crocheted lap blankets and Love Bears are made and distributed to the patients at the Veteran's Hospital.

Offenders at the prison said they were happy to make a difference in the lives of veterans and their children.

"Winning the Miss America 2000 title gave me the opportunity not only to travel across the United States speaking about the plight of our nation's forgotten heroes, but also to gain a national perspective on the issues. My concern, as the daughter of a veteran, is to find ways to increase awareness, education and funding for veterans' needs," added French.

The final request of the audience was to see Miss America's famous wave with her award winning grace and smile.

To learn more about Heather French Henry: Miss America 2000, please click here:

<http://www.heathersveterans.org>

Facts:

The Indiana Women's Prison made 100 sleeping bags and donated them to the American Legion to be distributed to homeless veterans.

The Indiana Women's Prison sewed large Christmas stockings and hand made bears for approximately 160 children of Veterans at the Knightstown Soldiers and Sailors Home.

### **About The Department of Correction**

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.